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REMARKS

Claims 4-24, 28-30, and 34-36 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Applicant amends claims 4-9 and 19-21 and cancels claims 1-3, 25-27, and 31-33.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 10-18, 22-24, 28-30 and 34-36 are allowable and that claims 4-9 and 19-21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-3 and 31-33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Takamine (US 2002/0000898). Claims 3, 27, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Takamine (US 2002/0017969). Claims 25-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takamine ('898) in view of Takamine ('969). Claims 3, 27, and 33 were rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as allegedly being unpatentable over claim 17 of U.S. Patent No. 6,762,657). Furthermore, claims 1-3, 25-27, and 31-33 were rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as allegedly being unpatentable over claims 23, 24, 29, 30, 31, 37, and 38 of U.S. Patent No. 6,621,380.

Claims 1-3, 25-27, and 31-33 have been canceled thereby rendering the above rejections moot. Each of claims 4-9 and 19-21 has been rewritten in Independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, claims 4-9 and 19-21 are allowable. All of the pending claims are now allowable.

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In view of the foregoing Remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1353.

Respectfully submitted,

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